

The Duty of Rebuking.

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D AT

Bow-Church,

December the 28th. 1702.

Before the Right Honourable the

L O R D - M A Y O R

A N D

ALDERMEN of LONDON,

And the SOCIETIES for Reforma-
tion of M A N N E R S.

To which is added, a

P O S T - S C R I P T

T O T H E

Religious S O C I E T I E S.

By *GEORGE STANHOPE*, D. D. Chaplain in
Ordinary to Her MAJESTY.

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To the Members of the
S O C I E T Y,
For Reformation of Manners.

Gentlemen,

YOUR Request of Publishing this Discourse meets with the more ready Compliance, not only as it testifies the Approbation of so many Pious and Intelligent Persons; but more particularly as it obviates a Hardship upon Me, with which You find occasions of engaging daily. The Censures I mean, or Misapprehensions of the Too many, who either do not perfectly understand, or will not bear the Liberty taken with them for their own Good. Of these the Former sort especially ought to have their Judgments set right; Both because most likely to be gained, and because such Information is not only Kindness to them, but Justice to our selves. And This is one of the good Effects I propose by offering to a more considerate and leisurely Review, some Particulars of Advice which a transient hearing did not, it seems, suffice to give all the Auditory my true Meaning in.

Far be it from Me to cast industriously the least Stumbling-block in the Way to Virtue, and the Amendment of Our selves or Others. Far from Me, to infuse ill Impressions of Any wise and good Men, engaged in so Worthy and Christian a Design. My purpose upon this Occasion was far otherwise. And will, I doubt not, appear so, to all, who compare the several Parts of this Sermon, who know, how to distinguish between Warnings and Reproaches; and, that to dissuade Men from doing amiss is One thing, and to accuse them of doing so is Another. 'Tis for the preventing such forced Constructions, that I profess'd my Exhortations to have been Formed Principally upon the Model of your own Rules. Which They who will give themselves the Pains of perusing, may

To the Members, &c.

perhaps be without farther Trouble disposed to believe, that not only your End, but your Methods for coming at it, are some of the Many Instances of Good Men and Good Actions suffering in the Common Opinion, by not being sufficiently understood.

Supposing then these Rules not to be in every Instance precisely followed, yet even so you are not to be charged with every slip, which Heedlessness or Ignorance, or even something worse than these might carry some of your Body into: It being an indisputable Truth, that every Set or Profession of Men in the World are to be judged by their Principles and Constitution, not by the mis-behaviour of some Members, who professed also to make These their Guide, though they do not in all Points follow it. But this is only a Case put, and not an Apology offered. For I dare presume upon leave in your Names to declare, that You know not how to wish any thing more for the general Reputation and Advantage of the Work you have undertaken, than that all Persons fit to be satisfied with your Methods as well as Design, would strictly enquire into your Orders, the Caution, the Prudence, and the Endeavours that no Irregularity shall blemish the Management of them. But still, in regard this Management may pass through many Hands, and not all these equally capable, or equally careful; the very Apprehension of those Failures, which if real, but rare, you would not in Equity be accountable for; are ground enough for a Minister to give Men warning of, and excite their Watchfulness against. Since therefore, He, who shews the way for cutting off occasion from Them that seek it most, is doing the proper Business, both of Preacher and Friend; I make no difficulty to perswade my self, that Persons of Your Character and Judgment will think me not at all the less your Affectionate, because taking a Freedom, which to Me seem'd requisite, for approving my self,

Gentlemen,

Your Faithful

Humble Servant,

G. Stanhope.

LEVITIC. XIX. 17.

Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour, and not suffer Sin upon him.

Without spending time in a Critical Examination of the several Senses, which Interpreters have thought these Words capable of, it shall suffice, by setting before you the Context, to justify the use I am about to make of them, upon occasion of this Solemn Meeting.

Thus then my Text is introduced and followed. *Ye shall do no Unrighteousness in Judgment: Thou shalt not respect the Person of the Poor, nor honour the Person of the Mighty: But in Righteousness shalt thou judge thy Neighbour. Thou shalt not go up and down as a Tale-bearer among thy People: neither shalt thou stand against the Blood of thy Neighbour. Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart. Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour, and not suffer Sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the Children of thy People, but thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.*

From hence, I take it, we may fairly infer, that by the Rebukes in my Text it is very reasonable to understand, either those Friendly Admonitions, and Private Reproofs, whereby we endeavour the persuading Offenders to Amendment; Or else those publick and judicial Proceedings, whereby such are charged before the Magistrate, and turn'd over to the Correction of the Laws. Now each of these Methods hath its proper Place and Season; Each, as Circumstances may fall out, becomes a Duty, which every Good Man ought to think himself concern'd in; Each is so necessary, but withal so nice a Subject; that I must beg the Favour of my Audience not to expect a full Disquisition of all the Rules belonging to, or all the Difficulties attending it. This is what neither the Nature of the Thing, nor the Time fit for me to engage your Attention will allow. But, in regard the Persons now Assembled are embarked together in a Religious Undertaking, which Ministers frequent, too frequent Occasions (God knows) for exercising

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exercising themselves in both the Kinds above-mentioned; I would fain hope that the End of my standing here may be in some measure answered, by saying somewhat to these following Heads.

I. *First*, By explaining the Duty enjoyn'd in the former Clause, *Tbou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour.*

II. *Secondly*, By pressing that Motive to this Duty, which I apprehend to lye in that latter Clause of my Text, of *Not suffering Sin upon him.* And then,

III. By addressing my self in a more particular manner to the Societies united for that very purpose, of having this Duty more vigorously and more successfully discharged.

I. In order to set the Duty of *Rebuking our Neighbour* in its true Light, which is the Business of my *First* Head; It will be expedient to make these two Enquiries,

1. *First*, In what Cases the Private, and in what the more Publick and Authoritative Rebukes are proper to be apply'd; and,

2. *Secondly*, By what Measures it is requisite we should proceed, both in the One and in the Other kind of them.

I. It is fit we examine with some good degree of Care, in what Cases and Crimes the Private, and in what the more Publick and Judicial Rebukes are proper to be applyed by us. The shortest Cut to resolving which Enquiry, I conceive will be, to govern our Determinations by the Nature and Consequence of the Misdemeanours themselves.

Now of These some there are, which commit such manifest Outrage upon God and Man, and injure or endanger Religion or the Publick Good so heinously, that no sufficient Reparation can be had, without the Satisfaction of a publick Punishment. And, hence we find not only the Laws of God heretofore, in such Instances as Idolatry and Blasphemy, forbidding all Concealment; but even the Laws of our own Nation, in some Invasions of Property, not admitting any private Compensation for the Damage sustained to discharge the Party injured from making any farther Prosecution. The Reason plainly is, because such Insults and Wrongs do not terminate in Man in the former; or in the latter Case, in the Person immediately grieved; but God and the Community are struck at
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by them. This then, I presume, may furnish us with Ground sufficient to build our *First* Rule upon, which is, That Offenders ought by all means to be made publick Examples, and that private Rebukes are not enough, where the Fundamentals of all Religion are endeavoured to be subverted, where the Common Safety is brought into manifest hazard, and the most sacred Rights of Society are invaded: In short, where open despiht is done to Laws, Divine or Humane, by Crimes of a Complexion so black, and of Consequences so pernicious, that even the Malefactor's Repentance and Reformation cannot compensate for them, unless he undergo the Ignominy and Pains provided by Justice for such injurious Insolence, and so be made a Terrour, for prevention of the like Attempts in time to come.

A *Second* sort of wicked Actions may be observed, from whence though there may not perhaps be in strict speaking any direct Damage, yet there comes a great deal of Scandal to the Publick. Such are all bold notorious Breaches of any Laws whatsoever, such the Habits of any Vice shamelessly persisted in, by which both God and all good Men are affronted and displeased; and yet the Sinner's brutish Obstinacy continues Proof against all the gentler Methods of Perswasion and friendly Expostulations. In these Circumstances it becomes us seriously to lay to heart, what encouragements to Wickedness such Examples of Presumption would minister, if no mark of Infamy and general Abhorrence be set upon them; to reflect upon the strict Obligation every Christian lies under to do his utmost, for discountenancing Evil and Ungodly Practices, and for supporting the Credit and Authority of Piety and Virtue in the World. For certainly, if the Cause of God and Religion be not a common Concern, nothing is: And therefore He, who suffers these to be insulted and trampled under Foot, tamely betrays those Rights, which of all others deserve to be esteem'd most dear and valuable, and such as every Man of us ought to shew himself exceeding jealous and vigorous in the defence of.

Now in this Case the Remedy should be proportion'd to the Disease, and the Malignity of a dangerous Example check'd effectually, by rendring the Reproach as publick as the Fault. And where a Legal Proof can be produced, and nothing less than a Legal Punishment can attain that effect; They, who
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are conscious of such offensive Courses, do not discharge the regard due to the Honour of God and Goodness, nor that Tenderneſs requir'd for the Safety of their Brethren's Souls, by private Reproofs alone; but are bound to call in the Assistance of the Magistrate, for the timely Correction and effectual Restraint of head-strong and contagious Wickedneſs. For thus far ſure the Apoſtle's command to *Timothy* may be applied to every Chriſtian, (with due allowance for difference of Stations and Capacities, and according as we are reſpectively qualified, to put, or procure it to be put in Execution) *Them that ſin*, that is, that do it openly, impudently, contemptuously, *rebuke before all, that Others alſo may fear.*

1 Tim. v.
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A *Third* Claſs of Actions are neceſſary to be taken notice of, which, though in their own Nature perhaps of equal Malignity, yet are not ſo with regard to their Conſequences and Effects. Such we may reckon Injuries merely perſonal, and Sins ſo ſecretly committed, as neither to affect the Common Safety, nor to become a Common Scandal. And here Private Rebukes duly qualified are firſt to be tried, without any recourſe to the Publick, till the Former are found insufficient. Theſe Laſt indeed do generally become a Duty, for the reforming Them who have defeated gentler Applications: But even Theſe are not ſo abſolutely neceſſary, as not to be very lawfully let alone, as oft as there is not a reaſonable Expectation of attaining that Good by them, which private Reproofs could not accompliſh.

The Reaſon of ſo great a Latitude allowed in This above the former Caſes is, that the Rebukes ſuited to them proceed upon different Principles. There we were repreſented as lying under Engagements to the Common Safety, the Honour of God, and our Governours, the Preſervation of the Laws in their juſt Authority, and the putting a ſtop to ſome notorious and ſpreading Evil. But here we are ſuppoſed to govern our ſelves by the ſingle Rule of Charity to our offending Brother; and having His Amendment only in View, are left at Liberty to purſue ſuch Methods, as in a Judgment of Diſcretion ſhall to Us appear moſt likely to reclaim him. Hence Informations to the Magiſtrate are, upon ſuch Occaſions, improper and out of Courſe, till private Remonſtrances have firſt been tried in vain: Hence where Theſe meet with a kindly Operation, the Duty of *Rebuking* is fully diſcharged: Where they

they do not, 'tis fit, ordinarily Speaking, that the Publick Rebukes supply that Defect; Because the greater part of Offenders are like to be awakened by Them, though deaf to the Other. But this is still but *Ordinarily*, for the Rule admits of as many Exceptions, as we know Instances of Tempers so perverse and refractory, that they will rather be enraged and turn desperate, then softned into better Manners, by either secret Reproof or open Shame.

The Former our Blessed Lord himself hath thought fit to dispense with, when we have to deal with *Dogs and Swine*, Mat. vii. 6. People so sunk into Brutality, and so Savage in their Dispositions, that they will *trample that which is holy under their feet, and turn again and rend us*. And for the Latter, it is worth our Remark, that the Jewish Commentators upon my very Text forbid the putting a Brother to Confusion of Face, lest open Disgrace and Severity should harden him in Wickedness; And they allow that to be lawful only to the Pertinacious and Restiff, when it may be a seasonable Expedient to bend and subdue their Stubbornness. And when This is the Case, how can we take better Steps, than those by which our Blessed Master directed his Disciples to move in that memorable Passage of St. *Matthew*; *If thy Brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his Fault between Thee and Him alone: If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more: And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the Church.* Mat. xviii. 15, &c. The Equity and Ground of which Method seems to me to lie in This; that, after the Second Admonition, the Fault was become Notorious, and the Perverseness a Matter of just Scandal. Such Contumacy therefore being of ill Example leaves the Complainant no longer the same Liberty, which he was formerly in Possession of. Because, though we may very well content our selves with Private Reprehensions, so long as our Trespassing Brother is the Only Object of our Care, and so Charity to Him the adequate Measure of our Conduct; Yet as the Condition of the thing, so likewise the Measures for our Behaviour upon it, must needs be greatly altered by the Offence becoming a Matter of general Observation, and the Care of preserving others from Infection thenceforth growing a necessary part of our Concern. And I can discern no just Cause, why the Rules of proceeding ordained by our Lord in Complaints to the Governours of the Church,

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should not be esteem'd a very proper Direction for our Appeals to the Civil Magistracy, where the Transgression is of Civil Cognisance.

2. After this Representation of the several sorts of Cases, to which I conceive the Private or the Publick Rebukes most properly to belong; I now proceed to the *Second* Branch of this Head, which respects the Measures fit to be observed in proceeding upon Either of them.

A serious Consideration of the Advantage we aim at, and keeping that Point constantly in view, is certainly the best Guide to all our Proceedings, and likeliest to suggest Means fittest for attaining it. Since therefore the Prospects Good Men have, and God (as is plain from the Context) intended they should have, in these Rebukes meant here, are the Preservation of mutual Charity, the expressing our Kindness, the promotion of Virtue in general, and the Reformation of the Party so Rebuked in particular; Those Methods, it is evident, have a right to our Choice, which (humanly Speaking) bid fairest for Success; And those must by all means be declined, which in a probable Judgment) must needs obstruct, or at least cannot be expected to serve or succeed to these Purposes. More particularly, These following Qualifications seem to be required, in the Persons the Manner, and the Time concern'd in such Rebukes.

In Private Reproofs it is fit *first of all*, that the Person Administring them be One, to whom his Character and Condition in the World, his eminent Wisdom, or unblemished Virtues, or particular Experience, His near Relation, or approved Friendship, or intimate Acquaintance, do give a more than ordinary Authority with, and Interest in the Party reprov'd. These are usually the Considerations, that must be a Guard and Privilege to such Freedoms, and recommend necessary, when they happen to be bold and very unwelcome, Truths. An Inferiour will naturally be suspected of envious Designs to render his Superiours Vile in the Eyes of others, and to raise his Own upon the Ruines of Their Reputation. And Zeal, though never so sincere, or expressed with never so just an Indignation, will make but poor amends for Sawciness and Ill-manners. The Hypocrite, that hath a *Beam* in his own *Eye*, cannot with any good Grace set himself to pluck the *Moat* out of his Brothers *Eye*. An Enemy will be thought

to triumph in the Faults he reproves, and rather to consult the gratifying a malicious Joy of his own, than to be mov'd by any real Concern for his Enemy's amendment. And a Stranger would incur the Censure of intermeddling too busily in matters that belong not to him. So that, in any of these Circumstances, (if no particular Exception alter the State of the Case) our manifest Dislike of the Sinners Misbehaviour, and our Prayers for his being brought to a better Sense of things, are the best, the only Service we can do him ; except that of communicating the Matter, and committing the *Rebuking* part to some other Hand, more capable upon the Accounts above-mention'd, of applying it with good Effect.

Again, Even where the *Person* is in all regards most capable, the *Manner* of applying our Rebukes asks a great deal of Caution and Skill. Now this should be done with great Gravity and Seriousness ; Calm Debate, but weighty Arguments ; and just representations of the Fault, in all the aggravating Circumstances, which may open Men's Eyes, and awaken them to a sense of the Folly, the Guilt, the Danger that attend it. All these should be mix'd with Instructions how to avoid the like Temptation another time ; but above all, it must be sure to carry all possible demonstrations of real Esteem, tender Concern, and fervent Charity. Light and trifling Behaviour upon such Occasions turns Men's Miscarriages into a Jest ; and Some have understood the latter Clause of my Text, as forbidding to make the Crimes we take upon us to rebuke, look little in Mens Eyes. Passion and Heat do but exasperate ; A Conscience inflamed and sore should be touch'd with a soft Hand ; and, if Sinners are too sturdy to be convinc'd and reason'd, there is much less ground to think, they will ever submit to be wrangled and hector'd into good Manners. And who is so weak as not to see, that They are spending their Breath upon these Occasions to very little purpose, who do not make it their first business to stand well in the Opinion of, and particularly to be believed to bear an unfeigned Affection toward, the Persons to whom they Address. This, alas ! is but an ungrateful Office at best, and will never be kindly receiv'd, where Men are not perswaded, that it is for Their Sakes we undertake it. And considering all, one would think it should be no hard matter to convince Men, that we could not be prevail'd with to give Them and Our selves so much trouble,

did not a strict regard to our own Duty, the tenderest Compassion for Souls purchased by the same precious Blood of God, and a sincere Love and earnest Desire of their Happiness and Safety in particular, even constrain us to this costly Experiment of our Piety and Friendship.

Nor is there less occasion for our Prudence, *Thirdly*, in timing such *Rebukes*: A sort of Medicine never administered successfully, but when it finds the Patient in a proper disposition to take it. All opportunities therefore must be diligently improved, the softest and most favourable Seasons closely watched, when Men are fittest to be spoken with, and easiest to be perswaded. To attack them, when ruffled with Passion, enflamed with Lust, or Wine, or in the very instant of Action and Delight, is like disputing with the North-wind in its fury. 'Tis better sure, for the most part, in all such Cases, to overlook the moment of Commission, and reserve our good Advice till the Spirits are cool, and the Head clear; till the Offender is not only more capable, but more content to be shewed to himself; and with the help of good management, more likely to look back with Horror upon the Deformity of those things, whose false Charms were owing to the delusion of inconsiderate Eagerness, and present Pleasure. 'Tis also advisable, when that can properly be done, to save the Indecency of an open Retraction, by reproving him alone. For there is a Principle in every Man not utterly abandoned, that naturally recoils upon these Remonstrances; And the healing meekness of a truly Christian Spirit is such an allay and temper to his Zeal, as must greatly recommend the Reproofs softened by it, to all Persons of good Breeding, and good Sense. There being no better way of approving our selves to such, the Persons so sincerely kind, so solicitous for their Good, so desirous to reclaim them which we would be thought to be, than such a tenderness for their Honour, as protects and covers them, not only from the reproach of Others, but even from their own guilty Blushes, by offering as little violence to their Modesty, as possibly we can.

These are some, but some out of many Instances, by which our Address in *Rebuking* should exercise it self: And all little enough to make that bitter Pill go down glibly, and operate kindly, which almost every Stomach nauseates, and is so apt to turn against. And these I have suffered my self to be the larger
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upon, because my Text is generally believed to concern private Rebukes more especially; because these, if duly applied, would in some measure supersede, and because it were better the Good you do should arise from these, than from the other. However, since the Publick also fall, not within my Text only, but (more out of Necessity than Choice I hope) within Your Practice too, it will be fit for me briefly to apply the foregoing Rules to Them likewise.

I. And *First*, for the Persons qualified to inform. It hath been made a Matter of Dispute, whether those of a private and meaner Capacity ought to accuse their Magistrates, or Superiours. The reason of the Doubt consists in this, that Authority is a sacred thing, and cannot be exercised to any good Effect, when the Persons vested with it are exposed to Shame and Contempt. (A Reason that deserves to be considered, more than we find it is, by those Sons of Darkness and Malice, who so industriously scatter their scurrilous Libels, and seditious Pamphlets among us.) But since even they, who start this Difficulty, are agreed, that, where Offences are so flagrant as to threaten the common Ruin, there any Man is allowed, nay obliged to bring any other Man to Justice: By parity of Reason we may, I think, infer, that, though the Men of higher Post should not be lightly, or wantonly, or through a Spirit of Envy brought into Disgrace; yet, as oft as such Disgrace becomes necessary to the Publick Welfare, and the Advantages accruing from thence do evidently outweigh its Inconveniences, Such also ought to be delivered up to the Correction of the Laws. The Harm, which comes from great Examples of uncommon and exorbitant Wickedness, is best provided against, by letting the World see, that even Greatness shall not secure to its self Impunity in Sinning. The Respects necessary to be observed in common Conversation may often prove a Bar to *Private* Admonition and Reproof; and it is no small part of great Men's Unhappiness, that they do so. But the *Publick* acknowledge not the same Distinctions: The Law considers the Quality of the Crime, abstracted from the Quality of the Criminal, and could not be a Security to the Subject in common, did it not admit of just and necessary Complaints, and distribute Punishments to Every guilty Subject, without respect of Persons.

It may be farther observed, That a Stranger, nay an Enemy, though but an ill Reprover, may yet be a good Informer; Provided always, that the Nature and Consequence of the Fault require it, that the matter of Fact be supported with substantial Evidence, that the Prosecution have nothing in it but Integrity, and Candour, and such a Demeanour throughout, as the most indifferent Stander-by, nay the dearest Friend, shall not be able to find any blame in; when the Merits of the Cause are strictly consider'd, apart from the Biass of Partiality, and particular Affection.

2. This last Provision leads me, *Secondly*, to the *Manner* fit for such Informations to proceed in. Now when the Context here opposes *Rebuking* our Neighbour, to *avenging*, and *bearing any Grudge*, and *bating him in our Heart*; 'Tis evident, the main point we have to guard against, is the ministring ground of Suspicion, that we are push'd on by Pique or Personal Repentment. It must needs be so, since the maintaining of Charity, and the amendment of our Brother are the Ends to be propounded in all our Rebukes. For Men are not like to love one another the better, nor to be much reformed, where they have cause to think, that there is a Leaven of Malice, or Envy, or any sour disingenuous Principle at the bottom of such Accusations. It is absolutely necessary then, that whoever undertakes this Invidious Work, should be act'd with an unaffected Zeal for the Glory of God, for the Good of the Publick, for the Suppression of Vice, and the Advancement of Virtue: That this Zeal be regular and impartial, free from Faction, void of Ostentation, full of Moderation and Temper, govern'd by such measures as the Laws and our respective Stations set us, expressing a detestation of the Offence, so as to acquit us from any prejudice to the Offender; Not such as rejoices in the Faults, or Punishments, or seeks the Humiliation and Dishonour of any Man whatsoever, farther than is needful for His Reformation, and a Warning to Others: That such Rebukes do not proceed upon flight Surmises, but be applied as our last Remedy; the effect of a Necessity, which the Offender himself hath brought upon us; a Necessity, which we are heartily sorry for, and would not submit to, but for our Brother's sake, who would not be reduced by gentler Methods, and yet must be reduced, or be undone for ever.

3. *Lastly*,

3. *Lastly*, The Time proper for these Publick Rebukes may be best adjusted by the Nature and Consequence of the Facts. In those of publick Scandal and contagious Influence, the growing Evil should be check'd betimes, before the Venom shed, and taint the Sound, or harden the Infected. In those of a more private Guilt and Importance, 'tis Charity to wait a convenient time, and afford leisure for second and better Thoughts. Good Advice sometimes works powerfully at a distance, which at the instant of giving seem'd to make little or no Impression. But when all reasonable Expectations of this kind are over, the same Charity which obliges to rebuke in this kind at all, obliges us to lose no time in it. Because the sooner Remedies are applied, the quicker and less painful will be the Cure. The habit of Vice will be less confirm'd, the Sinner less Headstrong, the Remembrance of his Guilt more fresh upon his Conscience, and the Proof of it less liable to the suspicion of Malice or Mistake. For these possibly, or to be sure for some other weighty Considerations, the Laws against prophane Swearing, and Drunkenness, and some other Immoral Practices, have limited the Informer to a certain number of Days. And, where the Law hath been silent in this particular, a Man's own Prudence will find it no hard matter to determine him in Offences of the like nature.

II. I come now to consider the Motive to this Duty, which is Charity, and the Charity I mean to insist upon is Three-fold; Charity to our Neighbours, to our selves, and to the Publick. Each, if not directly deducible from the very Words, yet countenanced by some Glosses on my Text; and All exceeding proper to be treated of at this time.

1. Let us *First*, consider the Charity to our offending Neighbour, contained expressly in that last Clause of my Text, *and not suffer Sin upon him*. For the enforcement of this, much, one would hope, need not be said in an Auditory of Christians. Of Christians, who are taught, not only to love their Neighbour as themselves, but that they neither love their Neighbour nor themselves, unless their Concern be principally directed to the Benefit of those Souls, for which He who best knew their value, declares the whole World an unprofitable exchange, and therefore esteem'd them a Purchase not unworthy the precious Blood of God himself. Of Christians,
I say,

I say, who, if such in Deed and not in Name only, firmly believe an everlasting State; and that all the Miseries of this, and all the Torments of the next World are the deserved consequences of Sin unrepented of. Admit then that there be, as 'tis confess'd there are, Discouragements great and many against so nice and unacceptable a Duty; yet can we in good earnest think these a Balance to the mischiefs of neglecting it? Is He a Friend, who sees the Enemy within our Quarters, and refuses to disturb us by a timely warning, that he is levelling at our Life? Or does that Man love us, who will not be at the pains to stop our wild Career, and with some Violence, if that be needful, pluck us back from the brow of a Precipice? Are Men in Fears and Frenzies to be lost, by humouring their Extravagancies? And can we discern no difference between the malicious Wounds of them that hate us, and the kind Corrections and Constraints of a Keeper, or a Physician? Men in their Senses do not use to judge so much amiss, where their Estates or Bodies are in danger. And what prodigious infatuation is that, which prevents the like good Offices, where the Madness is as refined, the Hazard as apparent, and the Mischief incomparably more fatal? Admit again, that our Neighbour will not suffer his Eyes to be opened; yet shall we therefore decline, when Circumstances make that proper, the more odious part of even compelling the Profligate to see and smart for his Folly? We, who ought to remember how vast a disproportion there is between the disgrace of an Accusation before any Magistrate upon Earth, and that insupportable Shame and everlasting Contempt, which shall one day be poured upon guilty Sinners, at His Tribunal, who shall come in flaming Fire to take Vengeance, not on them only that know not God, but on them especially, who though they know, yet will not obey the Gospel of his Son? If we can still be so stupid, still so defective in this instance of Charity, which labours by inflicting Temporal to prevent Eternal Reproofs and Punishments; let us at least be reproached into better Sense, by that wise Heathen; who, though a Stranger to the most dismal effects of Sin in another World, could yet deliver his Opinion of this Matter in that noble Sentence; *Molestā Veritas, siquidem ex eā nascitur Odium, sed multo molestius Obsequium, quod peccatis indulgens, amicos in præcipitium ferri sinit.* Plain profitable Truths, that is, are hard to be told, because they are generally ill-relished;

relished; but that cruel Complaisance is infinitely worse, and deserves to be more heinously resented, which, by flattering our Friends in their Vices, suffers them to run headlong into their own Ruin.

2. The Second Argument to this purpose is Charity to our selves. Upon which occasion it may not be amiss to take notice of a Construction put upon these Words by some Interpreters, (how properly I shall not stay to enquire, but with great truth to be sure as to the substance of it) who, instead of *suffering Sin upon him*, read, that thou *bear not Sin for him*. They, who are so frequently, and so solemnly commanded to Rom. xv. 2. look not only to their *own*, but to their *Brethrens* Wealth and Edification, must expect to render an account, as for their own, so 1 Cor. x. 24. for those Faults of Others, which are in any degree owing to their Connivance, or Encouragement. *Amici vitia si feras facis tua*, The Guilt and Punishment is not transferred, but extended by such means and of one Crime there are two Criminals. So that it concerns every one to consider, whether, so far as his Station renders him capable of discharging the Office of a Watchman, he be not included in that memorable Warning given by God to *Ezekiel*, *When I say to the Wicked, Thou shalt surely dye, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to turn the Wicked from his wicked way, to save his Life, that same wicked Man shall dye in his Iniquity, but his Blood will I require at thy Hand.* Ezek. lii. 18.

3. But there is certainly a *Third* Motive of great weight behind, and that is, The necessity of rebuking Offenders, in order to secure the Publick Welfare. You need not be told, that Vice is in its own Nature, and by necessary Consequence, the Disturber of Peace and Order, the Invader of Property, the Destroyer of Safety, and Society; in a word, the vilest Reproach, and the most dangerous Enemy to any People; And consequently that the suppression of it, even abstracting from the more weighty Considerations of Religion, is a Matter of human Policy, and acting in our own Defence. But 'tis as obvious too, that the Growth and Insolence of Lewdness and Injustice proceed, not so much from want of new and better Laws, as from the want of a vigorous Execution of those good ones we have already. And how shall these be executed, till They who violate and defy them, are brought to answer it by a Judicial Process? It is to very little purpose, that we loudly exclaim at, or passionately lament the dissolute Condition of the Age and Nation in which we live. These are but

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empty Words, and can never mend the Matter. To blame the remifsness of those in Power is not only unjust, but absurd, if we give them that have the Power no opportunity to exercise it regularly; if neither our private Admonitions restrain the Perswadeable, nor our publick Accusations provide for the Correction of the otherwise incurable Offenders; Let us at least do Our parts before we condemn them, to whom we render it impracticable to do what we call theirs 'Tis certain, legal Grievances are not possible to be redressed, till brought under a legal Cognisance And shall we sit still tamely, and see our selves undone, without once opening our Mouths to tell our Misery and Danger, to such as are set over us on purpose to prevent it? Except this first Wheel be put into Motion, the whole Engine must of necessity stand still. And it is so far from being a Comfort, or an Abatement, as to be indeed the highest aggravation of our Folly, and our Sorrows, to enjoy the best Laws, and the happiest Constitution; if we turn the One into a dead Letter, and will not suffer our selves to be blest'd by the Other. But blest'd by either we can never be, except effectual care be taken for the exemplary punishment of Wickedness; which, if triumphant, and once an Over match for Authority and Virtue, will soon subvert the very Foundations upon which all Government stands; and must, in the course of things, prove our swiftest, our heaviest, and most irreparable Destruction.

I must now beg your patience for some short Application of the Whole, resulting from the foregoing Heads, and more particularly suitable to the Persons, and the Occasion which have brought me hither.

1. *First* then, I should be very loath to have any thing in this Discourse so misunderstood, as if I meant thereby to encourage any frivolous and busie, any vexatious and spiteful Informers. That sort of mischievous Creatures I mean, who out of malicious design to expose, or for private Ends, or out of any other base intent, lie upon the Catch for Faults, aggravate Mens ignorant, or accidental, or otherwise involuntary Miscarriages; set themselves as Spies, make Conversation a Snare, and (like true Devils) tempt first, that they may afterwards have the barbarous Pleasure of Accusing and Tormenting. Light and Darknes are not more distant than are this venomous Brood from You, good Men; whose only Business and Desire it is to restrain

restrain those Exorbitances, which no good Man can, or ought patiently to see rampant, and outbraving the Laws of God and Man by their Impunity. There have been abroad in the World so many Monsters of this kind, that they have brought a Scandal upon the whole *Species*; and the numbers of them who proceed wrong, render Men too hard of belief, that any Informers act upon a right and truly virtuous Principle. But when due care is taken, that your Conduct be in all points agreeable to the Limitations laid down in the former parts of this Discourse; much of the Odium vanishes into nothing, and the little that remains deserves to be despised. It becomes then a Censure which brings Reputation, and a Resentment which it were a shame to be ashamed of. For, pray let any serious Man consider, Is it our Security, our Honour to have wholesome Laws, and can it be Infamous to endeavour that we shall have them to no purpose? Is this to be Subjects and Patriots? Is this to be good Men and Christians, to think Civility obliges us to see the most sacred things insulted and trodden under Foot, without vindicating, or taking any notice of the Affront? Did Martyrs even dare to dye for Religion, when the Laws of the State were against it, and have not We the Courage to speak, or shew any concern for Religion, when the Constitution is on Our side? And all for fear, that they who have no regard to Religion, should hate or revile us, for calling them to account? Can any Fidelity oblige us to flatter Men in Wickedness; or the Rules of good Breeding supersede those of the Bible and our Statute-Book? The Heathen Orator could say, that no Friendship binds against the Common Interest, and is it then a Bar to the higher and antecedent Engagements of Oaths, and Vows, and Sacramental Covenants superadded to the Advantage of the Publick? Let us not, I beseech you, continue to delude our selves with false Notions and empty Names; for such are Honour, Decency, and Friendship, when set in opposition to Virtue, Religion, and the common Good. Nay, they are worse than empty Names, they are the Honour of Conspirators, the Decency of Parasites, the Friendship of *Banditti* and Murderers. But if all these Considerations should still, though I am sure they should not, prove too weak; I have yet One Retreat left, which must on all hands be allow'd impregnable. 'Tis, that you would at least take effectual care to rebuke the Wicked by your Example, and shame them into better by your own good Lives. This

is a sort of Rebuke, which even the Nicest and most Captious cannot take offence at ; and so powerful a one withal it is, as would in great measure supply the place of the rest. For by degrees it would put Vice quite out of Countenance, and almost irresistibly draw Men over, to imitate that Goodness, which they cannot but approve.

2. *Secondly*, If these Obligations are so strong upon those of a private Capacity, I beg it may be consider'd how much more forcibly they bind Persons in any sort of Authority, as Parents, Masters, Magistrates, and inferiour Ministers of Justice. Such, it is plain, can check Vice, as with greater Efficacy, so with less Envy and Reflection: They are either skreen'd by their Character from, or they ought to be above the little Fears of Displeasure, which others may pretend in their excuse ; and therefore are more answerable for any Mischiefs that shall come by Their neglect.

For You it is, and such as You, Right Honourable and Worshipful, who serve the Crown in publick Commissions, that the Church begs of God his Blessing, Keeping and Grace; The two former to protect you in your Duty, the last to inspire you with Courage and Zeal, *truly and indifferently to minister Justice, for the punishment of Wickedness and Vice, and for the maintenance of his true Religion and Virtue.* It is from Your Countenance and Aid, that We of the Clergy may expect an additional Success to our Labours ; while You have power to compel those to good Manners, who are proof against Our Perswasions to good Principles. *A Rod for the Back of Fools and Scorners* is necessary Discipline, that they who will not practice Religion, may at least not presume to affront, or dare to scoff at it. And reason good there is for Your helping together with us, in your Reproofs, in your Examples, and in your Chastisements; since we are by our respective Offices not only embarked in the same common Cause of Justice and Virtue, but must expect the same Fate and Treatment in the execution of them. For they who hate and vilifie the Minister's Character, be well assured, do not, cannot upon their own Principles, bear any true Affection and Reverence to the Magistrates.

Next for the Constables and other inferiour Officers, whose business lies in enquiring into Abuses, and bringing them to Justice. Let me admonish Them, that whatsoever Favour or Affection may be thought allowable Restraints upon other Occasions, yet these are all out of doors, and so-

solemnly renounc'd in their Oath of Office. The Peace and Safety, yea and the good Behaviour of the place they serve for, is now so far deposited in Their Hands, that, if any thing tending to it's prejudice be willfully conniv'd at, He that overlooks the Fault, and obstructs redress upon it, is the Betrayer of his Country, as well as of his Oath and of his Conscience. I shall therefore conjure such most earnestly to remember that of Solomon, *If thou sayest, behold we knew it not, doth not he that pondereth the Heart consider it, and he that keepeth thy Soul, doth not he know it, and shall not he render to every Man according to his Works?* Prov. xxiv 12. Yes undoubtedly he will. To them who strengthen Sinners in their Wickedness he will repay Reproach and Vengeance; but to them who are truly Conscientious, and act for his Glory and the good of Souls, Honour and Recompence and a great Blessing.

3. Were but the Persons I have been Addressing to under This Particular, as Diligent and Zealous as they might and ought to be; there would be but little left to do, and indeed, small if any occasion for uniting into the Societies met here this Morning. To whom I am now in the last place about to apply my self, with all that freedom of Advice, which becomes my Function, and which They, who think it their Duty to exercise it towards others, I ought to presume will receive kindly, when directed to themselves.

The End you propose to your selves by these Societies is without dispute commendable and good. Approved by all whose Approbation is of value; Countenanc'd in particular manner by that Pious Queen of ever precious Memory, who as this day exchange'd her earthly for an immortal Crown of Glory: Enforced frequently by His late Majesty; And now afresh by Her present Majesty: Whose Encouragement every Work of Virtue and publick Good is sure to find; and who leads us on to Designs of this Nature, not more by the Wisdom of Her Laws, then by the lustre of Her own Example. But still, though back'd and supported with all these Advantages, Reformation of Manners, almost above any other undertaking, is certain to encounter with a World of Difficulties and Prejudices. It so much the more concerns all engag'd in it, to beware of Ministring ground of just Offence; and (if that be possible) to prevent their Good being any where Evil spoken of. In order whereunto suffer me Patiently, while

while I propose not my Own so much as Your Sense, and by reminding you of, more earnestly recommend, the following Cautions in proceedings of this Nature.

1. As to what regards your Informations. I think it not amiss to observe upon this Occasion, that were the World what it ought to be, the Vices you are labouring to reduce, should be effectually restrain'd by Authority and Corrections of another kind. The Censures of the Church I mean; which to People of a truly Christian Spirit, would be a greater Terror, than any Punishment the Sword of Civil Justice can inflict. But since the Degeneracy of Mankind, the unhappy Divisions among, and the unjustifiable Separations from us, (for to These, after all the Clamours of our Adversaries, the Inefficacy and Contempt of Ecclesiastical Discipline seems much more justly imputable, than to any corrupt Administration of the thing it self) since these things, I say, have made it needful for to flee now Succour to the Temporal Magistrate; and since your Zeal steps forth to our Relief; Let that too be so Temper'd with Discretion, as not to give any Person unnecessary trouble. Which, by what went before you plainly perceive I reckon to be done, as oft as any are expos'd to the Publick, whom private and friendly Rebukes would as effectually, and much more inoffensively Reclaim. And consequently, before Those have been first try'd, when by your selves, or by the Mediation of some other more proper hand, the making such Experiment is practicable. And I am apt to believe, at least am willing to hope, that there are not a great many, whose Hearts you might not find access to, and touch this way to as good purpose as the other. But be such few, or many, all those to be sure are an allow'd Exception to this General Rule. And therefore, in Circumstances of this kind, your own Prudence, and the Condition and Temper of them you have to deal with must be, and certainly are your best Guide.

Next, that you take special heed not to turn Justice into Gall and Worm-wood, by proceeding upon slight Surmises or flying Reports, by treating Facts in themselves harmless, or excusable, or not done with a purpose of offending, as if they were strictly Sinful and obstinate Violations of the Laws. For Reputation is a tender thing, and great Conscience ought
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to be made of bringing any Blemish upon it. Especially, since an in Age so addicted to Cenforiousness and Malice as ours, even a solemn Acquittal is far from making full amends, for the Shame of being rashly or wrongfully accus'd. So that nothing can draw on a deeper and more fatal Dislike to your Societies, than would any furious or overforward Prosecutions. And, as it is in general, so is it plainly with respect to your Condition and Design in particular, much better, that many Guilty should escape, than that One Innocent Person should be expos'd as a Criminal. Nay, as to Your Credit and good Acceptance in the World, I will venture to say, that it would obstruct these very much, to have the Innocent expos'd, not only to the Correction, but even to the Bench and Presence of a Magistrate; the disgraceful Formalities and the unhappy Necessity of a legal Justification.

Again, The thing is almost so evident as not to need mentioning, that the Conversation of every one who concerns himself in reforming others, ought to be without blame, in those Particulars especially, which he takes upon him to Rebuke: That no charge of Hypocrisy should lye against any such, nor the reprehensions of *a Mote in their Brothers Eye* be open to the Reproach of a *Beam in their own*. Nay, that they be not only Innocent but Prudent, acting as with Integrity, so with Meekness and Charity. Not over-valuing themselves or despising others upon any account whatsoever: Least of all, making Men's Affection to such Societies a Mark of Distinction, and Characteristick of a Virtuous Person: But being as well content to acknowledge and highly esteem the commendable Qualities of those that are not, as of those that are, united into, or the most Zealous Applauders of, such Bodies, and the Methods they have form'd themselves by.

You see how far I am from Flattering: I ought not, and I hope you would not have me do it. No, I am acting a more Friendly part, and such as, though full of Plain-dealing, is I take it secur'd from giving Offence, by a Guard of your own providing: The very Rules I mean and prudential Methods, which you have fix'd to your selves; expressly containing the most, and virtually I think the Whole, of what I have been advising. Nor would I be thought to insinuate that those Rules are not (I have reason to hope and believe they are) generally attended to: But I Exhort most earnestly, that, in these Cases particularly,

ly, they may be every where, and, if that can be, yet more punctually observ'd. 'Tis upon these Terms of Wisdom and Temper, Humility and Modesty, regular Justice and universal Charity, and upon these alone, that you can ever hope, either to put those Enemies, whom their own Vices make so, to silence; or to win over those good Men, who (perhaps for want of a more perfect Information) though equally desirous of Reformation, may not as yet be perfectly satisfi'd in all the Measures taken to promote it. Whether or how far such Dissatisfaction is reasonable, is not My Business to enquire; but it is certainly Yours to give all diligence, that it may not continue reasonable. The only part remaining for Me, on this occasion, is to say, For all the Good ye have already done the Cause of God and Virtue, *Blessed be ye of the Lord:* And for all you intend and endeavour to be Instruments of hereafter, may your every step be so exactly agreeable to Order and true Godliness; that not I only, but as many as love our Saviour Jesus Christ and his Gospel in Sincerity, may find reason to say, *The Lord Prosper you, we wish you good Luck in the Name of the Lord.*

And *Lastly*, may God the Author of all Holiness so abundantly shed forth his Spirit upon Our Church and People, as to let us see and feel the success of that Prayer put up to him this Festival; Even that he would *Mortify and kill all Vices in us; and so strengthen us by his Grace, that by the Innocency of our Lives, and the constancy of our Faith even unto Death, we may Glorify his holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Amen.

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POST-SCRIPT,
 TO THE
MEMBERS
 OF THE
RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES.

Gentlemen,

WHEN I had the honour of being call'd upon to Preach the foregoing Sermon, it was not my good Fortune to understand, or at least then to recollect, how perfectly distinct Your Societies are from those for Reformation. This induc'd me to insert an Application to Them also: Which, because upon better Information it appears to have been too foreign from the Business which brought me thither, I have separated from the Body of my Discourse; and yet in regard I am still of the Mind, that it may be of some use, I think it becomes me to offer it here, in a manner that will admit of a little more enlargement, and particular Address. In which it shall be my care to observe the same measures as before, and to frame my Advice chiefly upon Hints taken from your own Rules.

The many Books full of excellent Directions for a virtuous and godly Life, fitted for the meanest Capacities, and by your Diligence and Liberality distributed among many ignorant and indigent Families for their Instruction; the great Numbers of poor Children in and about our capital City, whose Clothing and Teaching at the Expence of well-dispos'd Persons have been so happily promoted by your means: And (which I ought

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least of all to omit) your stedfast adherence to, constant attendance upon, and exemplary Devotion in the Service and Sacraments of our establish'd Church, are Fruits that will make every good Man commend and bless the Tree on which they grow. And these are so conspicuous in most of your Members, as to render it great Uncharitableness to suspect any Harm, great Injustice not to acknowledge much Benefit intended and done, not only to the Christian Religion in general, but to our own Church and Constitution in particular, by Persons of such Principles and such Behaviour.

But, in regard the very best Things are capable of Abuse, and Offences may sometimes come from Practices, in which we cannot easily discern either Intention or natural Tendency to create them: Let me speak freely to you in one or two Points: Which, though the Measures you prescribe your selves have taken care to guard against, yet seem to require a more than ordinary Caution, and if not observ'd with a most watchful Strictness, will above all others expose you to Censure and Danger.

The Design of these Societies your selves profess to be the Advancement of real and sincere Piety, and an undisguis'd Holiness of Conversation: And, as all the Methods you propose may be greatly Conducive to these Ends, so much the greater part of them are certainly out of the reach of just Exception. But if, notwithstanding the frequent Opportunities of learning your Duty in Publick, and the ready access you may have to good Books, good Ministers, and good Friends in Private, it be still thought expedient to hold publick and solemn Conferences upon Religious Subjects; remember, that this is a matter, which will require a very prudent Conduct. To render these free from ill Consequences, and Suspicions, and Fears: You must keep close indeed, to the most Practical and Useful, which are but other Names for the plainest Heads of Discourse. Such as may Minister no Temptation to Self-conceit, or Ostentation of Parts, or the Ambition of being thought Wiser than one's Neighbours, but effectually prevent not only all Heat, but even all Itch of Dispute. And, if I may be allow'd (with all due deference to your respective Directours) to speak out, it were methinks worth Considering, whether some Judicious Exposition of our Excellent Church-Catechism, confirm'd by proper Texts of Scrip-

Scripture, Or some of those Excellent Treatises in which we have the happiness to abound, I say, whether a moderate Portion of these diligently read and inculcated at such Meetings, and every Member submitting to prove his own Proficiency to his proper Guide, by giving a good Account of himself, and instructing his Family at Home, might not as well answer all the Purposes intended to be serv'd the other way. They that are truly Meek and Modest Christians, and sincerely desirous of more perfect Knowledge, will not fail to find it here. But they who fancy themselves above so mean a Dispensation *know not what manner of Spirit they are of.*

Mistake me not in this Advice I beseech you: It is not, that the Ministers of the Church of *England* envy or grudge their People the largest Measures of Divine Wisdom. It is not, that they lye under any Apprehensions of falling into Disrespect, by Your increasing in it. No, I dare appeal to the Experience of all my Reverend Brethren, whether our Character do not find best regard from them that know God and his Word most. But there is, I take it, no Inconsistence at all between Wishing *all the Lord's People were Prophets*, and dreading the Consequence of their thinking themselves Prophets, when they are not so. And he, that shall carry his Reflection back some three or four-score Years, will find such wild Scruples, such fantastical Opinions, such monstrous Enthusiasms, such bold Invasions of the Priestly Office, such lamentable Confusions both in Church and State; from Men's taking upon them publickly to Exercise what they call'd their Gifts, in Expounding Scripture and teaching the things of God, without the previous Qualifications of Education, and Learning, and a Lawful Call to fit and Authorize them for it, and all this by such gentle Steps, and from such slender Beginnings; that no Man is to wonder, if many are exceeding fearful of the return of that which all of us have not yet ceas'd to feel the sad effects of. In a word, (Considering that the Weakness and Corruption of Humane Nature is still the same) if some good Men, after such an Example, be very Jealous of any Approaches, though never so small, towards Consequences, which they do not yet perceive the least Appearance of. Because they have already seen them grow out of Methods, which in all likelihood were Piously intended and innocently begun. And I dare say, you would be very loath to become,

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though but accidentally, the Instruments of promoting any thing in this Century, which deform'd and destroy'd Religion, under pretence of advancing and perfecting it in the last.

Let me in the next place earnestly entreat, that you would make it your great Business in all manner of Conversation about Religious Affairs, to make your selves and one another sensible, wherein it is, that true Religion consists; and, as you solemnly Profess to do, not to aim at the shew but the substance of it. Particularly let the Young and Zealous, but less Skillful among you, be thoroughly Convinc'd, that Reproving or Accusing them that do amiss, nay, that doing the contrary themselves, so far as concerns Sobriety and Temperance, strict Observation of the Lords day, frequent Praying, and Hearing, and Reading, and Receiving the Blessed Sacrament, that not all, not any of These are the Grofs of Religion. These are some Parts of it, these are Helps towards the Perfection of it, these are the Acts which prepare and fit us for that Grace of God, whereby alone we can be enabl'd to perform the rest, without which these shall Profit us nothing. You can never therefore labour to better purpose, never Consult the Honour of God and the Good of Souls more effectually, than by inculcating upon your selves and others the just Extent, the absolute Necessity of that last Clause, which in our excellent Catechism Summs up the Duty to your Neighbour in these Words, *To learn and labour truly to get my own living, and to do my Duty in that state of Life, unto which it shall please God to call me.* A Strict and Conscientious Discharge of Mens respective Relations and Capacities, an honest Care for their Families, Diligence in the Works of their Lawful Calling, Fidelity to those by whom they are intrusted, Obedience to Masters and Governours of every sort, This is true Religion; And He, who declares himself better pleas'd with Mercy than Sacrifice, is serv'd in these things so acceptably, that he will not excuse the Neglect of them ordinarily, in their proper Season and Measure, upon the Account even of Religious Exercises themselves. Remember, that as it is impossible for an Adulterer, a Fornicator, a Drunkard, a Swearer, a Prophane Person, or the like; so is it for an unkind Husband, a cruel Master, an unnatural Father, an undutiful Child, an unfair Dealer, a negligent or malepert Servant, or a contentious Neighbour, to be a good Christian; though never so So-

ber or Devout. For Religion is a Connection of all Virtues and Graces, a Scheme of Harmony and Order, and the Beauty of it is seen, the Benefit of it is felt, by keeping every one of its Professors employ'd within his own proper Sphere, contented with the lot and business, which the good Providence of God hath cut out to him: And by thus recommending it self to the Esteem and Practice of all Wise Men, at once securing the Peace and serving the Uses of all Mankind. So that the way to be satisfy'd what we ought to do, is to consider what we are, in the World, and the way to do it is diligently to attend to those excellent Directions laid down in Scripture, which, besides the general Duties obliging us as Christians in common, descends to those which are peculiar to the different States and Conditions of Men. A thorough Information in which, as it is the surest expedient to render them belov'd and acceptable to all with whom they have Dealing or Conversation: So is it likewise to make them easie to themselves, by settling their Minds, and quieting a World of Scruples, as unnecessary usually as they are perplexing to tender but injudicious Consciences: Consciences Divided in their Duty between God and Man, and not Skill'd in the bounds Proper to each, where they do not in reality but only seem to interfere with one another.

As I ought to commend the Stedfastness you profess to the establish'd Church, so must I take the Liberty to put you in mind of the Proper way of Expressing it. Which is by all due deference to your respective Pastors. *Not having itching Ears,* nor *heaping to your selves Teachers,* (as the Apostle speaks) nor *holding men's Persons in Admiration;* but *keeping the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace,* and waiting with all Humility for the Blessing and Grace of God upon his own Ordinances, in a regular constant Parochial Communion. Your Disposition to this is in good degree express'd, by the readiness you prescribe to be directed by the Minister of your own Parish, or one of his Approving. And I can from my own Experience testify the Practice of such as I am concern'd to enquire into, to be agreeable to it. Be sure hold fast this Principle, and be not prevail'd with to depart from it, upon any known or suppos'd failures in your own, or any false notions of greater Edification from another Minister. For all this tends to loosen the band of Union among Christians. An Union, which in the nature of the thing must be gradual and therefore as National Churches make.

makes up the Church Universal, Diocesan the National, Parochial the Diocesan, so single Persons must maintain this Union by Constituting the Parochial. And be assur'd, that God is never more Honour'd, nor Men more Edifi'd, than when they apply to him in the most perfect Order and Peace, and receive his Word and Sacraments, at the Hands of those to whom the Laws of his Church, and of the State conformable to these, have committed the trust of rightly and duly administering them to the Congregations respectively under their Charge.

Lastly, Your Care can never be too great in observing the Rules you have set your selves against Censoriousness, spiritual Pride, Affectation, Moroseness, any thing indeed that is particular, and aims more at the Shew than the Substance of Religion. For all these will not fail to provoke, and give even good Men occasion, if not to speak reproachfully, yet to think very indifferently of you. So likewise for *setting a greater value on your selves for being of the Society, and despising and thinking worse of others that are not*: This were not more invidious than it is unreasonable. For are not others Members of a Society too, the best in the whole World, oblig'd to the same Duties, and acknowledging the same Master? There is not one Virtue, you have bound your selves to, which every Member of the Christian Church does not stand bound to by the Sacredest of all Ties, Sacramental Vows and Covenants: And all the difference is, that You, by some voluntary additional Acts of your own, have ty'd your selves to certain Methods, which you conceive may be helps toward the more punctual Discharge of that one and the same Obligation, which is common to every visible Member of Christ. And every one, who considers the Engagements he lies under upon this account, will think himself oblig'd, if not in yours, in some other way, to have a strict regard, not only to his own Salvation, but to that of as many more as he hath the Power of contributing towards. And the good God increase daily more and more his Grace upon the People of this Church, that they may, under the influences of it, with a Zeal acted by Prudence, and a Success answerable to the importance of the Undertaking, encounter all manner of Vice, promote true Piety and Virtue, and convince the Adversaries of our Establishment, how false those Suggestions are, which would represent the Principles of the establish'd

establish'd Church as indulging any looseness or the Lives of her Members as more Scandalous than her Enemies, for the allow'd Practice of any sinful Liberty whatsoever. No, may this be one good effect of your Societies, to add daily to the Number of God's Faithful Servants, whom neither the Papist nor the Dissenter may find matter of Reproach against: But, however their prejudices may dispose either, to condemn our Church in other Points, yet when they see our good Works, these may even constrain Both to confess, that God is in us of a Truth.

You see what Improvement I have made of this Opportunity. I hope you will think it such: If your Rules are not observ'd with all the exactness that might be, there is but too much occasion for it: If this Discourse fall into any Hands, whether those Rules have not come, it will at least do you the Service of justifying the Measures you oblige yours selves to walk by: If these be as nicely follow'd, as they are Prudently contriv'd; and as generally known, as it is for your advantage they should be; yet even thus St. Peter hath furnish'd me with Apology sufficient; since I hope I may have leave to say with Him; *I will not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be already establish'd in the Truth: Yea I think it meet to stir you up by putting you in remembrance* I am

Your

Friend and Servant

G. STANHOPE.

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E R R A T A.

PAge 15. line 16. read *shall not have.* p. 18. l. 17. *r. needful now to see*
for. p. 19. l. 2. *r. in an Age.*

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